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BOOK CRITICS CIRCLE AWARDS
(VOICED PIECE AND INSERT IN TAPE LIBRARY)

INTRO:

THE NATIONAL BOOK CRITICS CRICLE HAS NAMED THE FOUR BOOKS THEY CONSIDER THE BEST WORK WRITTEN BY AMERICANS IN NINETEEN SEVENTY-SEVEN. ALICE RICHMAN REPORTS FROM NEW YORK.

VOICE:

IN MAKING THEIR SELECTIONS, THE NATIONAL BOOK CRITICS CIRCLE MEMBERS HAVE REMAINED TRUE TO THE BOOKS THEY ORIGINALLY PRAISED IN THEIR REVIEWS. THE TWO HUNDRED-MEMBER CIRCLE SELECTED WINNERS IN THE FIELDS OF FICTION, POETRY, CRITICISM AND GENERAL NON-FICTION.

THEIR AWARD FOR FICTION GOES TO TONI MORRISON FOR HER WIDELY-PRAISED "SONG OF SOLOMON." MISS MORRISON'S NOVEL TRACES THE RISE OF A MIDDLE WESTERN BLACK FAMILY. (OPT) ITS MAIN CHARACTER RETURNS TO THE SOUTH IN A SEARCH FOR HIS OWN AND HIS FAMILY'S HERITAGE. (END OPT) ROBERT LOWELL WHO DIED LAST YEAR AT THE AGE OF SIXTY, RECEIVED THE AWARD FOR HIS FINAL VOLUME OF POEMS. THE BOOK IS CALLED "DAY BY DAY" AND IN IT MR. LOWELL TRACED SOME OF THE OLD ENDINGS AND NEW BEGINNINGS OF HIS PERSONAL LIFE. SUSAN SONTAG'S COLLECTION OF CRITICAL ESSAYS CALLED "ON PHOTOGRAPHY" HAS BEEN HONORED FOR THE AUTHOR'S EXPLORATIONS INTO THE MEANING AND USES OF PHOTOGRAPHY IN ART AND SOCIETY. THE FOURTH AND FINAL AWARD, THIS TIME IN THE FIELD OF GENERAL NON-FICTION, WAS GIVEN TO WALTER JACKSON BATE FOR HIS BIOGRAPHY "SAMUEL JOHNSON." (OPT) MR. BATE'S BOOK WAS GREETED BY THE CRITICS AS AN IMPORTANT WORK SHOWING HOW JOHNSON OVERCAME THE POVERTY AND ILLNESS THAT MIGHT

VOICE: (CONT'D)

HAVE DEFEATED A LESS STRONG PERSONALITY. (END OPT)

THE NATIONAL BOOK CRITICS CIRCLE WAS FORMED IN NINETEEN SEVENTY-FIVE. IT IS THE YOUNGEST AMONG THE LITERARY AWARD-GRANTING ORGANIZATIONS. (OPT) THE NATIONAL BOOK AWARDS WILL BE MADE IN APRIL. THE PULITZER PRIZES, WHICH ARE MOSTLY FOR JOURNALISM, WILL BE GIVEN IN MAY. (END OPT) ELIOT FREMONT-SMITH, THE CIRCLE'S PRESIDENT TOLD VOA WHY HIS FELLOW-CRITICS THOUGHT THEY SHOULD ADD THEIR OWN RECOGNITION OF OUTSTANDING LITERATURE.

TAPE: CUT ONE -- FREMONT SMITH

"WE FELT THERE WAS ROOM FOR OUR OWN AWARDS WHICH WOULD BE GIVEN BY CONTINUING WORKING, FULL-TIME PROFESSIONAL CRITICS RATHER THAN BY PANELS OF (AD HOC) JUDGES APPOINTED EACH YEAR. UNLIKE THE NATIONAL BOOK AWARDS WHICH ARE SPONSORED BY THE AMERICAN BOOK PUBLISHING INDUSTRY, WE ARE WHOLLY INDEPENDENT OF THE INDUSTRY AND FELT THAT IT WAS A GOOD THING. AND FINALLY, I DON'T BELIEVE THERE'S ENOUGH RECOGNITION OF EXCELLENCE. THERE'S CERTAINLY NOT TOO MUCH RECOGNITION."

VOICE:

THE WINNERS OR THE NATIONAL BOOK CRITICS CIRCLE AWARDS WILL RECEIVE THEIR HONORS ON JANUARY FOURTEENTH IN NEW YORK.

BML/PBM